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EFFICIENCY IN CHILD SAVING

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As nearly one-half of the mortality of infants under one year of age is preventable, increasing interest is being aroused to such an extent in its study and prevention, that child saving activities have been organized in most of our American cities, many of them through the instrumentality of the National Association for the Study and Prevention of Infant Mortality.

There are many associations looking to the care of the mother before the birth of the child; to securing legislation to prevent improper marriages; to controlling the "black plague;" to suppressing the free traffic in liquor, which plays such an important part in heredity; to preventing the propagation of defective classes, a prominent factor in causing infant mortality—as a recent study of this subject in Philadelphia has shown that forty-one per cent of all children born of feeble-minded women die in infancy; and to dealing with the whole problem through the science of eugenics.

Efficient work is performed and some good results are obtained through private agencies by the establishing of milk stations, child welfare associations, children's clinics with social service, lectures to mothers and "little mothers," and various undertakings for the welfare of the child. The municipality makes a brave effort to obtain results through generous distribution of literature; by public bulletins, through the newspapers and magazines; by the establishment of open-air hospitals on boats, river piers and in parks; and through the control of maternities and baby farms by licenses and inspections. But as the best results are obtained through education, as ignorance is the greatest barrier to all progress, the highest standard of efficiency assuring the greatest results can be reached only by entering the sanctity of the mother's home, by one of her own sex who is able to speak her language and who, through sympathy, kindness and knowledge, gains the mother's confidence. This is accomplished by the visiting trained nurse, the only means of reaching the greatest majority who cannot or will not avail themselves of the opportunities afforded by the various methods above mentioned. The practicability of this service is demonstrated by the experience

of Philadelphia in the past two years. Eight trained nurses were employed whose energies were confined to a certain circumscribed area in order that fair comparisons could be made. The general publicity campaign, the maintenance of hospitals in the parks and on the piers, the modified milk stations and other activities affected the entire city about equally, so that any difference in morbidity and mortality between the wards 2, 3, 4 and 5 in which the eight special nurses worked and the city at large can be properly attributed to the work of these women.

In order to make the demonstration as valuable as possible, an insanitary group of wards was selected, with poor housing facilities, poor plumbing and much surface drainage, having a highly congested population, largely foreign and ignorant, with a high death rate and the largest number of infants per thousand of population in the city.

The average death rate per thousand of population for five years preceding 1911 in the entire city was 17.68; in these wards it was 21.33. The average birth rate per thousand of population for five years preceding 1911 in the entire city was 24.18; in this district it was 43.37. There were 147 people per acre in the district, compared to 19 per acre for the entire city.

The comparison of statistics of 1911 as compared with 1910 is as follows:

	Entire City (47 wards) Per Cent	Wards 2, 3, 4, 5 Per Cent
Reduction in mortality in infants under one year of age. . . .	11.8	27.3
Reduction in mortality from diarrhoea and enteritis in infants under two years of age.	22.0	34.6
Reduction in mortality from pneumonia.	8.0	17.0
Increase in mortality from tuberculosis of lungs.	3.0	1.0
Reduction in mortality from epidemic and infectious diseases, .	3.0	2.6
Decrease in mortality from bronchitis.	14.0	35.0
Decrease in general mortality.	2.8	11.3

Figures other than those concerning infant mortality are given as the nurses, by instruction, cover the prevention of disease, general sanitation and hygiene.

There should be a municipal department of child hygiene in all large cities, which, co-operating with the various private activities and charity associations in the same line of work, would increase the standard of efficiency in the study and prevention of infant mortality.